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NOVEL BAKING ENZYME NBE 045 AND USES THEREOF

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NOVEL BAKING ENZYME NBE 045 AND USES THEREOF

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Field of the invention

The invention relates to a newly identified polynucleotide sequence comprising a gene that encodes a novel baking enzyme. The invention features the full length nucleotide sequence of the novel gene, the cDNA sequence comprising the full
10 length coding sequence of the novel baking enzyme as well as the amino acid sequence of the full-length functional protein and functional equivalents thereof. The invention also relates to methods of using these enzymes in industrial processes and methods of diagnosing fungal infections. Also included in the invention are cells transformed with a polynucleotide according to the invention and cells wherein a baking
15 enzyme according to the invention is genetically modified to enhance its activity and/or level of expression.

Background of the invention

20

Baked products such as bread are prepared from a dough which is usually made from the basic ingredients (wheat) flour, water and optionally salt. Depending on the baked products, other ingredients added may be are sugars, flavours etceteras. For leavened products, primarily baker's yeast is used next to chemical leavening systems such as a combination of an acid (generating compound) and
25 bicarbonate.

In order to improve the handling properties of the dough and/or the final properties of the baked products there is a continuous effort to develop processing aids with improving properties. Processing aids are defined herein as compounds that improve the handling properties of the dough and/or the final properties of the baked products.
30 Dough properties that may be improved comprise machineability, gas retaining capability, reduced stickiness, elasticity, extensibility, moldability etcetera. Properties of the baked products that may be improved comprise loaf volume, crust crispiness, crumb texture and softness, flavour relative staleness and shelf life. These dough and/or baked product improving processing aids can be divided into two groups: chemical additives and
35 enzymes.

Yeast, enzymes and chemical additives are generally added separately to the dough. Yeast may be added as a liquid suspension, in a compressed form or as

active dry (ADY) or instant dry yeast (IDY). The difference between these yeast formulations is the water- and yeast dry matter content. Liquid yeast has a yeast dry matter content of less than 25% (w/v). Cream yeast is a particular form of liquid yeast and has a dry matter content between 17 and 23% (w/v). Compressed yeast has a dry matter content between 25-35% (w/v) while the dry yeast formulations have a dry matter content between 92-98% (w/v).

Enzymes may be added in a dry, e.g. granulated form or in dissolved form. The chemical additives are in most cases added in powder form. Also, processing aid compositions which are tailored to specific baking applications, may be composed of a dedicated mixture of chemical additives and enzyme.

The preparation of a dough from the ingredients and processing aids described above is well known in the art and comprises mixing of said ingredients and processing aids and one or more moulding and fermentation steps.

The preparation of baked products from such doughs is also well known in the art and may comprise molding and shaping and further fermentation of the dough followed by baking at required temperatures and baking times.

Chemical additives with improving properties comprise oxidising agents such as ascorbic acid, bromate and azodicarbonate, reducing agents such as L-cysteine and glutathione, emulsifiers acting as dough conditioners such as diacetyl tartaric esters of mono/diglycerides (DATEM), sodium stearoyl lactylate (SSL) or calcium stearoyl lactylate (CSL), or acting as crumb softeners such as glycerol monostearate (GMS) etceteras, fatty materials such as triglycerides (fat) or lecithin and others.

As a result of a consumer-driven need to replace the chemical additives by more natural products, several enzymes have been developed with dough and/or baked product improving properties and which are used in all possible combinations depending on the specific baking application conditions. Suitable enzymes include starch degrading enzymes, arabinoxylan- and other hemicellulose degrading enzymes, cellulose degrading enzymes, oxidizing enzymes, fatty material splitting enzymes, protein degrading, modifying or crosslinking enzymes.

Starch degrading enzymes are for instance endo-acting enzymes such as alpha-amylase, maltogenic amylase, pullulanase or other debranching enzymes and exo-acting enzymes that cleave off glucose (amyloglucosidase), maltose (beta-amylase), maltotriose, maltotetraose and higher oligosaccharides.

Arabinoxylan- and other hemicellulose degrading enzymes are for instance xylanases, pentosanases, hemicellulase, arabinofuranosidase, glucanase and

others.

Cellulose degrading enzymes are for instance cellulase (beta-1,4-endoglucanase), cellobiohydrolase and beta-glucosidase.

5 Oxidizing enzymes are for instance glucose oxidase, hexose oxidase, pyranose oxidase, sulfhydryl oxidase, lipoxygenase, laccase, polyphenol oxidases and others.

Fatty material splitting enzymes are for instance triacylglycerol lipases, phospholipases (such as A₁, A₂, B, C and D) and galactolipases.

10 Protein degrading, modifying or crosslinking enzymes are for instance endo-acting proteases (serine proteases, metalloproteases, aspartyl proteases, thiol proteases), exo-acting peptidases that cleave off one amino acid, or dipeptide, tripeptide etceteras from the N-terminal (aminopeptidases) or C-terminal (carboxypeptidases) ends of the polypeptide chain, asparagines or glutamine deamidating enzymes such as

15 deamidase and peptidoglutaminase or crosslinking enzymes such as transglutaminase. Baking enzymes may conveniently be produced in microorganisms. Microbial baking enzymes are available from a variety of sources; Bacillus spec. are a common source of bacterial enzymes, whereas fungal enzymes are commonly produced in Aspergillus spec.

20 Baking enzymes may be used in a manifold of baked goods. The term "baked goods" is herein defined as to comprise bread products such as tin bread, loaves of bread, French bread as well as rolls, cakes, pies, muffins, yeast raised and cake doughnuts and the like.

25 In the above processes, it is advantageous to use baking enzymes that are obtained by recombinant DNA techniques. Such recombinant enzymes have a number of advantages over their traditionally purified counterparts. Recombinant enzymes may be produced at a low cost price, high yield, free from contaminating agents like bacteria or viruses but also free from bacterial toxins or contaminating other enzyme activities.

Object of the invention

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It is an object of the invention to provide novel polynucleotides encoding novel baking enzymes with improved properties. A further object is to provide naturally and recombinantly produced baking enzymes as well as recombinant strains producing these. Also fusion polypeptides are part of the invention as well as

35 methods of making and using the polynucleotides and polypeptides according to the invention.

Summary of the invention

The invention provides for novel polynucleotides encoding novel baking enzymes, in particular enzymes with Cutinase activity (E.C. Number 3.1.1.-).

5 More in particular, the invention provides for polynucleotides having a nucleotide sequence that hybridises preferably under highly stringent conditions to a sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2. Consequently, the invention provides nucleic acids that are more than 40% such as about 60%, preferably 65%, more preferably 70%, even more preferably 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, 96%, 97%,
10 98% or 99% homologous to the sequences according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.

In a more preferred embodiment the invention provides for such an isolated polynucleotide obtainable from a filamentous fungus, in particular *A. niger* is preferred.

15 In one embodiment, the invention provides for an isolated polynucleotide comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding a polypeptide with an amino acid sequence as shown in SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.

In a further preferred embodiment, the invention provides an isolated polynucleotide encoding at least one functional domain of a polypeptide according to
20 SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.

In a preferred embodiment the invention provides a baking enzyme gene according to SEQ ID NO: 1. In another aspect the invention provides a polynucleotide, preferably a cDNA encoding an *A. niger* baking enzyme whose amino acid sequence is shown in SEQ ID NO: 3 or variants or fragments of that polypeptide.
25 In a preferred embodiment the cDNA has a sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 2 or functional equivalents thereof.

In an even further preferred embodiment, the invention provides for a polynucleotide comprising the coding sequence of the polynucleotides according to the invention, preferred is the polynucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2.

30 The invention also relates to vectors comprising a polynucleotide sequence according to the invention and primers, probes and fragments that may be used to amplify or detect the DNA according to the invention.

In a further preferred embodiment, a vector is provided wherein the polynucleotide sequence according to the invention is functionally linked with regulatory
35 sequences suitable for expression of the encoded amino acid sequence in a suitable host cell, such as *A. niger* or *A. oryzae*. The invention also provides methods for

preparing polynucleotides and vectors according to the invention.

The invention also relates to recombinantly produced host cells that contain heterologous or homologous polynucleotides according to the invention.

5 In another embodiment, the invention provides recombinant host cells wherein the expression of a baking enzyme according to the invention is significantly increased or wherein the activity of the baking enzyme is increased.

10 In another embodiment the invention provides for a recombinantly produced host cell that contains heterologous or homologous DNA according to the invention and wherein the cell is capable of producing a functional baking enzyme according to the invention, preferably a cell capable of over-expressing the baking enzyme according to the invention, for example an *Aspergillus* strain comprising an increased copy number of a gene or cDNA according to the invention.

15 In yet another aspect of the invention, a purified polypeptide is provided. The polypeptides according to the invention include the polypeptides encoded by the polynucleotides according to the invention. Especially preferred is a polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.

20 Accordingly, in one aspect the present invention provides a baking enzyme composition containing as an active ingredient an enzyme according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.

In another aspect, the invention provides a method of making baked goods wherein there is incorporated into the dough used for making the baked goods an enzyme according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.

25 Fusion proteins comprising a polypeptide according to the invention are also within the scope of the invention. The invention also provides methods of making the polypeptides according to the invention.

The invention also relates to the use of the baking enzyme according to the invention in any industrial process as described herein

Detailed description of the invention

Polynucleotides

30 The present invention provides polynucleotides encoding a baking enzyme, tentatively called NBE 045, having an amino acid sequence according to SEQ
35 ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof. The sequence of the gene encoding NBE 045 was determined by sequencing a genomic clone obtained from *Aspergillus niger*.

The invention provides polynucleotide sequences comprising the gene encoding the NBE 045 baking enzyme as well as its complete cDNA sequence and its coding sequence. Accordingly, the invention relates to an isolated polynucleotide comprising the nucleotide sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 or functional equivalents thereof.

More in particular, the invention relates to an isolated polynucleotide hybridisable under stringent conditions, preferably under highly stringent conditions, to a polynucleotide according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2. Advantageously, such polynucleotides may be obtained from filamentous fungi, in particular from *Aspergillus niger*. More specifically, the invention relates to an isolated polynucleotide having a nucleotide sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.

The invention also relates to an isolated polynucleotide encoding at least one functional domain of a polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.

As used herein, the terms "gene" and "recombinant gene" refer to nucleic acid molecules which may be isolated from chromosomal DNA, which include an open reading frame encoding a protein, e.g. an *A. niger* baking enzyme. A gene may include coding sequences, non-coding sequences, introns and regulatory sequences. Moreover, a gene refers to an isolated nucleic acid molecule as defined herein.

A nucleic acid molecule of the present invention, such as a nucleic acid molecule having the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 or a functional equivalent thereof, can be isolated using standard molecular biology techniques and the sequence information provided herein. For example, using all or portion of the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1 or the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2 as a hybridization probe, nucleic acid molecules according to the invention can be isolated using standard hybridization and cloning techniques (e. g., as described in Sambrook, J., Fritsh, E. F., and Maniatis, T. *Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual*. 2nd, ed., Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, 1989).

Moreover, a nucleic acid molecule encompassing all or a portion of SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 can be isolated by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) using synthetic oligonucleotide primers designed based upon the sequence information contained in SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.

A nucleic acid of the invention can be amplified using cDNA, mRNA or alternatively, genomic DNA, as a template and appropriate oligonucleotide primers

according to standard PCR amplification techniques. The nucleic acid so amplified can be cloned into an appropriate vector and characterized by DNA sequence analysis.

Furthermore, oligonucleotides corresponding to or hybridisable to nucleotide sequences according to the invention can be prepared by standard synthetic techniques, e. g., using an automated DNA synthesizer.

In a preferred embodiment, an isolated nucleic acid molecule of the invention comprises the nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2. The sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2 corresponds to the coding region of the *A. niger* NBE 045 cDNA. This cDNA comprises sequences encoding the *A. niger* NBE 045 polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3.

In another preferred embodiment, an isolated nucleic acid molecule of the invention comprises a nucleic acid molecule which is a complement of the nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 or a functional equivalent of these nucleotide sequences.

A nucleic acid molecule which is complementary to another nucleotide sequence is one which is sufficiently complementary to the other nucleotide sequence such that it can hybridize to the other nucleotide sequence thereby forming a stable duplex.

One aspect of the invention pertains to isolated nucleic acid molecules that encode a polypeptide of the invention or a functional equivalent thereof such as a biologically active fragment or domain, as well as nucleic acid molecules sufficient for use as hybridisation probes to identify nucleic acid molecules encoding a polypeptide of the invention and fragments of such nucleic acid molecules suitable for use as PCR primers for the amplification or mutation of nucleic acid molecules.

An "isolated polynucleotide" or "isolated nucleic acid" is a DNA or RNA that is not immediately contiguous with both of the coding sequences with which it is immediately contiguous (one on the 5' end and one on the 3' end) in the naturally occurring genome of the organism from which it is derived. Thus, in one embodiment, an isolated nucleic acid includes some or all of the 5' non-coding (e.g., promotor) sequences that are immediately contiguous to the coding sequence. The term therefore includes, for example, a recombinant DNA that is incorporated into a vector, into an autonomously replicating plasmid or virus, or into the genomic DNA of a prokaryote or eukaryote, or which exists as a separate molecule (e.g., a cDNA or a genomic DNA fragment produced by PCR or restriction endonuclease treatment) independent of other sequences. It also includes a recombinant DNA that is part of a hybrid gene encoding an additional polypeptide that is substantially free of cellular

material, viral material, or culture medium (when produced by recombinant DNA techniques), or chemical precursors or other chemicals (when chemically synthesized). Moreover, an "isolated nucleic acid fragment" is a nucleic acid fragment that is not naturally occurring as a fragment and would not be found in the natural state.

5 As used herein, the terms "polynucleotide" or "nucleic acid molecule" are intended to include DNA molecules (e.g., cDNA or genomic DNA) and RNA molecules (e.g., mRNA) and analogs of the DNA or RNA generated using nucleotide analogs. The nucleic acid molecule can be single-stranded or double-stranded, but preferably is double-stranded DNA. The nucleic acid may be synthesized using
10 oligonucleotide analogs or derivatives (e.g., inosine or phosphorothioate nucleotides). Such oligonucleotides can be used, for example, to prepare nucleic acids that have altered base-pairing abilities or increased resistance to nucleases.

 Another embodiment of the invention provides an isolated nucleic acid molecule which is antisense to an NBE 045 nucleic acid molecule, e.g., the coding
15 strand of an NBE 045 nucleic acid molecule. Also included within the scope of the invention are the complement strands of the nucleic acid molecules described herein.

Sequencing errors

20 The sequence information as provided herein should not be so narrowly construed as to require inclusion of erroneously identified bases. The specific sequences disclosed herein can be readily used to isolate the complete gene from filamentous fungi, in particular *A. niger* which in turn can easily be subjected to further sequence analyses thereby identifying sequencing errors.

25 Unless otherwise indicated, all nucleotide sequences determined by sequencing a DNA molecule herein were determined using an automated DNA sequencer and all amino acid sequences of polypeptides encoded by DNA molecules determined herein were predicted by translation of a DNA sequence determined as above. Therefore, as is known in the art for any DNA sequence determined by this
30 automated approach, any nucleotide sequence determined herein may contain some errors. Nucleotide sequences determined by automation are typically at least about 90% identical, more typically at least about 95% to at least about 99.9% identical to the actual nucleotide sequence of the sequenced DNA molecule. The actual sequence can be more precisely determined by other approaches including manual DNA sequencing
35 methods well known in the art. As is also known in the art, a single insertion or deletion in a determined nucleotide sequence compared to the actual sequence will cause a

frame shift in translation of the nucleotide sequence such that the predicted amino acid sequence encoded by a determined nucleotide sequence will be completely different from the amino acid sequence actually encoded by the sequenced DNA molecule, beginning at the point of such an insertion or deletion.

5 The person skilled in the art is capable of identifying such erroneously identified bases and knows how to correct for such errors.

Nucleic acid fragments, probes and primers

10 A nucleic acid molecule according to the invention may comprise only a portion or a fragment of the nucleic acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2, for example a fragment which can be used as a probe or primer or a fragment encoding a portion of a NBE 045 protein. The nucleotide sequence determined from the cloning of the NBE 045 gene and cDNA allows for the generation of probes and
15 primers designed for use in identifying and/or cloning other NBE 045 family members, as well as NBE 045 homologues from other species. The probe/primer typically comprises substantially purified oligonucleotide which typically comprises a region of nucleotide sequence that hybridizes preferably under highly stringent conditions to at least about 12 or 15, preferably about 18 or 20, preferably about 22 or 25, more
20 preferably about 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, or 75 or more consecutive nucleotides of a nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 or of a functional equivalent thereof.

 Probes based on the NBE 045 nucleotide sequences can be used to detect transcripts or genomic NBE 045 sequences encoding the same or homologous
25 proteins for instance in other organisms. In preferred embodiments, the probe further comprises a label group attached thereto, e.g., the label group can be a radioisotope, a fluorescent compound, an enzyme, or an enzyme cofactor. Such probes can also be used as part of a diagnostic test kit for identifying cells which express a NBE 045 protein.

30

Identity & homology

 The terms "homology" or "percent identity" are used interchangeably herein. For the purpose of this invention, it is defined here that in order to determine the
35 percent identity of two amino acid sequences or of two nucleic acid sequences, the sequences are aligned for optimal comparison purposes (e.g., gaps can be introduced

in the sequence of a first amino acid or nucleic acid sequence for optimal alignment with a second amino or nucleic acid sequence). The amino acid residues or nucleotides at corresponding amino acid positions or nucleotide positions are then compared. When a position in the first sequence is occupied by the same amino acid residue or nucleotide as the corresponding position in the second sequence, then the molecules are identical at that position. The percent identity between the two sequences is a function of the number of identical positions shared by the sequences (i.e., % identity = number of identical positions/total number of positions (i.e. overlapping positions) x 100). Preferably, the two sequences are the same length.

The skilled person will be aware of the fact that several different computer programmes are available to determine the homology between two sequences. For instance, a comparison of sequences and determination of percent identity between two sequences can be accomplished using a mathematical algorithm. In a preferred embodiment, the percent identity between two amino acid sequences is determined using the Needleman and Wunsch (J. Mol. Biol. (48):444-453 (1970)) algorithm which has been incorporated into the GAP program in the GCG software package (available at <http://www.gcg.com>), using either a Blossom 62 matrix or a PAM250 matrix, and a gap weight of 16, 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, or 4 and a length weight of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. The skilled person will appreciate that all these different parameters will yield slightly different results but that the overall percentage identity of two sequences is not significantly altered when using different algorithms.

In yet another embodiment, the percent identity between two nucleotide sequences is determined using the GAP program in the GCG software package (available at <http://www.gcg.com>), using a NWSgapdna.CMP matrix and a gap weight of 40, 50, 60, 70, or 80 and a length weight of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. In another embodiment, the percent identity two amino acid or nucleotide sequence is determined using the algorithm of E. Meyers and W. Miller (CABIOS, 4:11-17 (1989) which has been incorporated into the ALIGN program (version 2.0) (available at: <http://vega.igh.cnrs.fr/bin/align-guess.cgi>) using a PAM120 weight residue table, a gap length penalty of 12 and a gap penalty of 4.

The nucleic acid and protein sequences of the present invention can further be used as a "query sequence" to perform a search against public databases to, for example, identify other family members or related sequences. Such searches can be performed using the NBLAST and XBLAST programs (version 2.0) of Altschul, et al. (1990) J. Mol. Biol. 215:403—10. BLAST nucleotide searches can be performed with the NBLAST program, score = 100, wordlength = 12 to obtain nucleotide sequences

homologous to NBE 045 nucleic acid molecules of the invention. BLAST protein searches can be performed with the XBLAST program, score = 50, wordlength = 3 to obtain amino acid sequences homologous to NBE 045 protein molecules of the invention. To obtain gapped alignments for comparison purposes, Gapped BLAST can be utilized as described in Altschul et al., (1997) Nucleic Acids Res. 25(17):3389-3402. When utilizing BLAST and Gapped BLAST programs, the default parameters of the respective programs (e.g., XBLAST and NBLAST) can be used. See <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>.

10 **Hybridisation**

As used herein, the term "hybridizing" is intended to describe conditions for hybridization and washing under which nucleotide sequences at least about 50%, at least about 60%, at least about 70%, more preferably at least about 80%, even more preferably at least about 85% to 90%, more preferably at least 95% homologous to each other typically remain hybridized to each other.

A preferred, non-limiting example of such hybridization conditions are hybridization in 6X sodium chloride/sodium citrate (SSC) at about 45 °C, followed by one or more washes in 1 X SSC, 0.1 % SDS at 50 °C, preferably at 55 °C, preferably at 60 °C and even more preferably at 65 °C.

Highly stringent conditions include, for example, hybridizing at 68 °C in 5x SSC/5x Denhardt's solution / 1.0% SDS and washing in 0.2x SSC/0.1% SDS at room temperature. Alternatively, washing may be performed at 42 °C.

The skilled artisan will know which conditions to apply for stringent and highly stringent hybridisation conditions. Additional guidance regarding such conditions is readily available in the art, for example, in Sambrook et al., 1989, Molecular Cloning, A Laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor Press, N.Y.; and Ausubel et al. (eds.), 1995, Current Protocols in Molecular Biology, (John Wiley & Sons, N.Y.).

Of course, a polynucleotide which hybridizes only to a poly A sequence (such as the 3' terminal poly(A) tract of mRNAs), or to a complementary stretch of T (or U) residues, would not be included in a polynucleotide of the invention used to specifically hybridize to a portion of a nucleic acid of the invention, since such a polynucleotide would hybridize to any nucleic acid molecule containing a poly (A) stretch or the complement thereof (e.g., practically any double-standed cDNA clone).

35 **Obtaining full length DNA from other organisms**

In a typical approach, cDNA libraries constructed from other organisms, e.g. filamentous fungi, in particular from the species *Aspergillus* can be screened.

For example, *Aspergillus* strains can be screened for homologous
5 NBE 045 polynucleotides by Northern blot analysis. Upon detection of transcripts homologous to polynucleotides according to the invention, cDNA libraries can be constructed from RNA isolated from the appropriate strain, utilizing standard techniques well known to those of skill in the art. Alternatively, a total genomic DNA library can be screened using a probe hybridisable to a NBE 045 polynucleotide
10 according to the invention.

Homologous gene sequences can be isolated, for example, by performing PCR using two degenerate oligonucleotide primer pools designed on the basis of nucleotide sequences as taught herein.

The template for the reaction can be cDNA obtained by reverse
15 transcription of mRNA prepared from strains known or suspected to express a polynucleotide according to the invention. The PCR product can be subcloned and sequenced to ensure that the amplified sequences represent the sequences of a new NBE 045 nucleic acid sequence, or a functional equivalent thereof.

The PCR fragment can then be used to isolate a full length cDNA
20 clone by a variety of known methods. For example, the amplified fragment can be labeled and used to screen a bacteriophage or cosmid cDNA library. Alternatively, the labeled fragment can be used to screen a genomic library.

PCR technology also can be used to isolate full length cDNA sequences from other organisms. For example, RNA can be isolated, following
25 standard procedures, from an appropriate cellular or tissue source. A reverse transcription reaction can be performed on the RNA using an oligonucleotide primer specific for the most 5' end of the amplified fragment for the priming of first strand synthesis.

The resulting RNA/DNA hybrid can then be "tailed" (e.g., with
30 guanines) using a standard terminal transferase reaction, the hybrid can be digested with RNase H, and second strand synthesis can then be primed (e.g., with a poly-C primer). Thus, cDNA sequences upstream of the amplified fragment can easily be isolated. For a review of useful cloning strategies, see e.g., Sambrook et al., supra; and Ausubel et al., supra.

35 Whether or not a homologous DNA fragment encodes a functional NBE 045 protein, may easily be tested by methods known in the art. Methods for

testing enzyme activity of Cutinase s (E.C. number 3.1.1.-) may be found on <http://www.biochem.ucl.ac.uk/bsm/enzymes/>.

Vectors

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Another aspect of the invention pertains to vectors, preferably expression vectors, containing a nucleic acid encoding a NBE 045 protein or a functional equivalent thereof. As used herein, the term "vector" refers to a nucleic acid molecule capable of transporting another nucleic acid to which it has been linked. One
10 type of vector is a "plasmid", which refers to a circular double stranded DNA loop into which additional DNA segments can be ligated. Another type of vector is a viral vector, wherein additional DNA segments can be ligated into the viral genome. Certain vectors are capable of autonomous replication in a host cell into which they are introduced (e.g., bacterial vectors having a bacterial origin of replication and episomal mammalian
15 vectors). Other vectors (e.g., non-episomal mammalian vectors) are integrated into the genome of a host cell upon introduction into the host cell, and thereby are replicated along with the host genome. Moreover, certain vectors are capable of directing the expression of genes to which they are operatively linked. Such vectors are referred to herein as "expression vectors". In general, expression vectors of utility in recombinant
20 DNA techniques are often in the form of plasmids. The terms "plasmid" and "vector" can be used interchangeably herein as the plasmid is the most commonly used form of vector. However, the invention is intended to include such other forms of expression vectors, such as viral vectors (e.g., replication defective retroviruses, adenoviruses and adeno-associated viruses), which serve equivalent functions.

25

The recombinant expression vectors of the invention comprise a : nucleic acid of the invention in a form suitable for expression of the nucleic acid in a host cell, which means that the recombinant expression vector includes one or more regulatory sequences, selected on the basis of the host cells to be used for expression, which is operatively linked to the nucleic acid sequence to be expressed. Within a
30 recombinant expression vector, "operatively linked" is intended to mean that the nucleotide sequence of interest is linked to the regulatory sequence(s) in a manner which allows for expression of the nucleotide sequence (e.g., in an *in vitro* transcription/translation system or in a host cell when the vector is introduced into the host cell). The term "regulatory sequence" is intended to include promoters, enhancers
35 and other expression control elements (e.g., polyadenylation signal). Such regulatory sequences are described, for example, in Goeddel; *Gene Expression Technology*:

Methods in Enzymology 185, Academic Press, San Diego, CA (1990). Regulatory sequences include those which direct constitutive expression of a nucleotide sequence in many types of host cells and those which direct expression of the nucleotide sequence only in a certain host cell (e.g. tissue-specific regulatory sequences). It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the design of the expression vector can depend on such factors as the choice of the host cell to be transformed, the level of expression of protein desired, etc. The expression vectors of the invention can be introduced into host cells to thereby produce proteins or peptides, encoded by nucleic acids as described herein (e.g. NBE 045 proteins, mutant forms of NBE 045 proteins, fragments, variants or functional equivalents thereof, fusion proteins, etc.).

The recombinant expression vectors of the invention can be designed for expression of NBE 045 proteins in prokaryotic or eukaryotic cells. For example, NBE 045 proteins can be expressed in bacterial cells such as *E. coli*, insect cells (using baculovirus expression vectors) yeast cells or mammalian cells. Suitable host cells are discussed further in Goeddel, *Gene Expression Technology: Methods in Enzymology* 185, Academic Press, San Diego, CA (1990). Alternatively, the recombinant expression vector can be transcribed and translated *in vitro*, for example using T7 promoter regulatory sequences and T7 polymerase.

Expression vectors useful in the present invention include chromosomal-, episomal- and virus-derived vectors e.g., vectors derived from bacterial plasmids, bacteriophage, yeast episome, yeast chromosomal elements, viruses such as baculoviruses, papova viruses, vaccinia viruses, adenoviruses, fowl pox viruses, pseudorabies viruses and retroviruses, and vectors derived from combinations thereof, such as those derived from plasmid and bacteriophage genetic elements, such as cosmids and phagemids.

The DNA insert should be operatively linked to an appropriate promoter, such as the phage lambda PL promoter, the *E. coli* lac, trp and tac promoters, the SV40 early and late promoters and promoters of retroviral LTRs, to name a few. Other suitable promoters will be known to the skilled person. In a specific embodiment, promoters are preferred that are capable of directing a high expression level of baking enzymes in filamentous fungi. Such promoters are known in the art. The expression constructs may contain sites for transcription initiation, termination, and, in the transcribed region, a ribosome binding site for translation. The coding portion of the mature transcripts expressed by the constructs will include a translation initiating AUG at the beginning and a termination codon appropriately positioned at the end of the polypeptide to be translated.

Vector DNA can be introduced into prokaryotic or eukaryotic cells via conventional transformation or transfection techniques. As used herein, the terms "transformation" and "transfection" are intended to refer to a variety of art-recognized techniques for introducing foreign nucleic acid (e.g., DNA) into a host cell, including
5 calcium phosphate or calcium chloride co-precipitation, DEAE-dextran-mediated transfection, transduction, infection, lipofection, cationic lipid-mediated transfection or electroporation. Suitable methods for transforming or transfecting host cells can be found in Sambrook, et al. (*Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual*, 2nd, ed. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, NY,
10 1989), Davis et al., *Basic Methods in Molecular Biology* (1986) and other laboratory manuals.

For stable transfection of mammalian cells, it is known that, depending upon the expression vector and transfection technique used, only a small fraction of cells may integrate the foreign DNA into their genome. In order to identify
15 and select these integrants, a gene that encodes a selectable marker (e.g., resistance to antibiotics) is generally introduced into the host cells along with the gene of interest. Preferred selectable markers include those which confer resistance to drugs, such as G418, hygromycin and methotrexate. Nucleic acid encoding a selectable marker can be introduced into a host cell on the same vector as that encoding a NBE 045 protein
20 or can be introduced on a separate vector. Cells stably transfected with the introduced nucleic acid can be identified by drug selection (e.g. cells that have incorporated the selectable marker gene will survive, while the other cells die).

Expression of proteins in prokaryotes is often carried out in *E. coli* with vectors containing constitutive or inducible promoters directing the expression of
25 either fusion or non-fusion proteins. Fusion vectors add a number of amino acids to a protein encoded therein, e.g. to the amino terminus of the recombinant protein. Such fusion vectors typically serve three purposes: 1) to increase expression of recombinant protein; 2) to increase the solubility of the recombinant protein; and 3) to aid in the purification of the recombinant protein by acting as a ligand in affinity purification.
30 Often, in fusion expression vectors, a proteolytic cleavage site is introduced at the junction of the fusion moiety and the recombinant protein to enable separation of the recombinant protein from the fusion moiety subsequent to purification of the fusion protein. Such enzymes, and their cognate recognition sequences, include Factor Xa, thrombin and enterokinase.

35 As indicated, the expression vectors will preferably contain selectable markers. Such markers include dihydrofolate reductase or neomycin resistance for

eukarotic cell culture and tetracycline or ampicillin resistance for culturing in *E. coli* and other bacteria. Representative examples of appropriate host include bacterial cells, such as *E. coli*, *Streptomyces* and *Salmonella typhimurium*; fungal cells, such as yeast; insect cells such as *Drosophila* S2 and *Spodoptera* Sf9; animal cells such as CHO, COS and Bowes melanoma; and plant cells. Appropriate culture mediums and conditions for the above-described host cells are known in the art.

Among vectors preferred for use in bacteria are pQE70, pQE60 and PQE-9, available from Qiagen; pBS vectors, Phagescript vectors, Bluescript vectors, pNH8A, pNH16A, pNH18A, pNH46A, available from Stratagene; and ptrc99a, pKK223-3, pKK233-3, pDR540, pRIT5 available from Pharmacia. Among preferred eukaryotic vectors are PWLNEO, pSV2CAT, pOG44, pZT1 and pSG available from Stratagene; and pSVK3, pBPV, pMSG and pSVL available from Pharmacia. Other suitable vectors will be readily apparent to the skilled artisan.

Among known bacterial promoters for use in the present invention include *E. coli* lacI and lacZ promoters, the T3 and T7 promoters, the gpt promoter, the lambda PR, PL promoters and the trp promoter, the HSV thymidine kinase promoter, the early and late SV40 promoters, the promoters of retroviral LTRs, such as those of the Rous sarcoma virus ("RSV"), and metallothionein promoters, such as the mouse metallothionein-I promoter.

Transcription of the DNA encoding the polypeptides of the present invention by higher eukaryotes may be increased by inserting an enhancer sequence into the vector. Enhancers are cis-acting elements of DNA, usually about from 10 to 300 bp that act to increase transcriptional activity of a promoter in a given host cell-type. Examples of enhancers include the SV40 enhancer, which is located on the late side of the replication origin at bp 100 to 270, the cytomegalovirus early promoter enhancer, the polyoma enhancer on the late side of the replication origin, and adenovirus enhancers.

For secretion of the translated protein into the lumen of the endoplasmic reticulum, into the periplasmic space or into the extracellular environment, appropriate secretion signal may be incorporated into the expressed polypeptide. The signals may be endogenous to the polypeptide or they may be heterologous signals.

The polypeptide may be expressed in a modified form, such as a fusion protein, and may include not only secretion signals but also additional heterologous functional regions. Thus, for instance, a region of additional amino acids, particularly charged amino acids, may be added to the N-terminus of the polypeptide to improve stability and persistence in the host cell, during purification or during

subsequent handling and storage. Also, peptide moieties may be added to the polypeptide to facilitate purification.

Polypeptides according to the invention

5

The invention provides an isolated polypeptide having the amino acid sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 3, an amino acid sequence obtainable by expressing the polynucleotide of SEQ ID NO: 1 in an appropriate host, as well as an amino acid sequence obtainable by expressing the polynucleotide sequences of SEQ
10 ID NO: 2 in an appropriate host. Also, a peptide or polypeptide comprising a functional equivalent of the above polypeptides is comprised within the present invention. The above polypeptides are collectively comprised in the term "polypeptides according to the invention"

The terms "peptide" and "oligopeptide" are considered synonymous
15 (as is commonly recognized) and each term can be used interchangeably as the context requires to indicate a chain of at least two amino acids coupled by peptidyl linkages. The word "polypeptide" is used herein for chains containing more than seven amino acid residues. All oligopeptide and polypeptide formulas or sequences herein are written from left to right and in the direction from amino terminus to carboxy
20 terminus. The one-letter code of amino acids used herein is commonly known in the art and can be found in Sambrook, et al. (*Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual*, 2nd, ed. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, NY, 1989)

By "isolated" polypeptide or protein is intended a polypeptide or
25 protein removed from its native environment. For example, recombinantly produced polypeptides and proteins expressed in host cells are considered isolated for the purpose of the invention as are native or recombinant polypeptides which have been substantially purified by any suitable technique such as, for example, the single-step purification method disclosed in Smith and Johnson, Gene 67:31-40 (1988).

30 The NBE 045 baking enzyme according to the invention can be recovered and purified from recombinant cell cultures by well-known methods including ammonium sulfate or ethanol precipitation, acid extraction, anion or cation exchange chromatography, phosphocellulose chromatography, hydrophobic interaction chromatography, affinity chromatography, hydroxylapatite chromatography and lectin
35 chromatography. Most preferably, high performance liquid chromatography ("HPLC") is employed for purification.

Polypeptides of the present invention include naturally purified products, products of chemical synthetic procedures, and products produced by recombinant techniques from a prokaryotic or eukaryotic host, including, for example, bacterial, yeast, higher plant, insect and mammalian cells. Depending upon the host employed in a recombinant production procedure, the polypeptides of the present invention may be glycosylated or may be non-glycosylated. In addition, polypeptides of the invention may also include an initial modified methionine residue, in some cases as a result of host-mediated processes.

A NBE 045 polypeptide according to the invention may be advantageously used in baking processes. The amount of enzyme to be added to the dough is determined empirically. It may depend on the quality of the flour used, the degree of improvement which is required, the kind of bread or baked goods, the method of preparing the dough, the proportion of other ingredients etcetera.

The effect of the addition of the NBE 045 enzyme according to the invention manifests itself in the physical properties of dough and the quality of the baked goods. By the addition of the enzyme, the dough has improved elasticity, is less sticky, and machinability is significantly improved. Also, the volume of the baked goods is increased, the crumb has a finer structure and a better softness is obtained. Staling of the bread is suppressed when a NBE 045 enzyme is added to the dough.

20

Protein fragments

The invention also features biologically active fragments of the polypeptides according to the invention.

Biologically active fragments of a polypeptide of the invention include polypeptides comprising amino acid sequences sufficiently identical to or derived from the amino acid sequence of the NBE 045 protein (e.g., the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3), which include fewer amino acids than the full length protein, and exhibit at least one biological activity of the corresponding full-length protein. Typically, biologically active fragments comprise a domain or motif with at least one activity of the NBE 045 protein. Preferred is a fragment with Cutinase activity.

A biologically active fragment of a protein of the invention can be a polypeptide which is, for example, 10, 25, 50, 100 or more amino acids in length. Moreover, other biologically active portions, in which other regions of the protein are deleted, can be prepared by recombinant techniques and evaluated for one or more of the biological activities of the native form of a polypeptide of the invention.

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The invention also features nucleic acid fragments which encode the above biologically active fragments of the NBE 045 protein.

Fusion proteins

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The proteins of the present invention or functional equivalents thereof, e.g., biologically active portions thereof, can be operatively linked to a non-NBE 045 polypeptide (e.g., heterologous amino acid sequences) to form fusion proteins. As used herein, a NBE 045 "chimeric protein" or "fusion protein" comprises a
10 NBE 045 polypeptide operatively linked to a non-NBE 045 polypeptide. A "NBE 045 polypeptide" refers to a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence corresponding to NBE 045, whereas a "non-NBE 045 polypeptide" refers to a polypeptide having an amino acid sequence corresponding to a protein which is not substantially homologous to the NBE 045 protein, e.g., a protein which is different from the NBE 045 protein and
15 which is derived from the same or a different organism. Within a NBE 045 fusion protein the NBE 045 polypeptide can correspond to all or a portion of a NBE 045 protein. In a preferred embodiment, a NBE 045 fusion protein comprises at least one biologically active fragment of a NBE 045 protein. In another preferred embodiment, a NBE 045 fusion protein comprises at least two biologically active portions of a NBE 045
20 protein. Within the fusion protein, the term "operatively linked" is intended to indicate that the NBE 045 polypeptide and the non-NBE 045 polypeptide are fused in-frame to each other. The non-NBE 045 polypeptide can be fused to the N-terminus or C-terminus of the NBE 045 polypeptide.

For example, in one embodiment, the fusion protein is a GST-NBE
25 045 fusion protein in which the NBE 045 sequences are fused to the C-terminus of the GST sequences. Such fusion proteins can facilitate the purification of recombinant NBE 045. In another embodiment, the fusion protein is a NBE 045 protein containing a heterologous signal sequence at its N-terminus. In certain host cells (e.g., mammalian and Yeast host cells), expression and/or secretion of NBE 045 can be increased
30 through use of a heterologous signal sequence.

In another example, the gp67 secretory sequence of the baculovirus envelope protein can be used as a heterologous signal sequence (*Current Protocols in Molecular Biology*, Ausubel et al., eds., John Wiley & Sons, 1992). Other examples of eukaryotic heterologous signal sequences include the secretory sequences of melittin
35 and human placental alkaline phosphatase (Stratagene; La Jolla, California). In yet another example, useful prokaryotic heterologous signal sequences include the phoA

secretory signal (Sambrook et al., *supra*) and the protein A secretory signal (Pharmacia Biotech; Piscataway, New Jersey).

5 A signal sequence can be used to facilitate secretion and isolation of a protein or polypeptide of the invention. Signal sequences are typically characterized by a core of hydrophobic amino acids which are generally cleaved from the mature protein during secretion in one or more cleavage events. Such signal peptides contain processing sites that allow cleavage of the signal sequence from the mature proteins as they pass through the secretory pathway. The signal sequence directs secretion of the protein, such as from a eukaryotic host into which the expression vector is
10 transformed, and the signal sequence is subsequently or concurrently cleaved. The protein can then be readily purified from the extracellular medium by art recognized methods. Alternatively, the signal sequence can be linked to the protein of interest using a sequence which facilitates purification, such as with a GST domain. Thus, for instance, the sequence encoding the polypeptide may be fused to a marker sequence,
15 such as a sequence encoding a peptide, which facilitates purification of the fused polypeptide. In certain preferred embodiments of this aspect of the invention, the marker sequence is a hexa-histidine peptide, such as the tag provided in a pQE vector (Qiagen, Inc.), among others, many of which are commercially available. As described in *Gentz et al, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 86:821-824 (1989)*, for instance, hexa-
20 histidine provides for convenient purification of the fusion protein. The HA tag is another peptide useful for purification which corresponds to an epitope derived of influenza hemagglutinin protein, which has been described by *Wilson et al., Cell 37:767 (1984)*, for instance.

Preferably, a NBE 045 chimeric or fusion protein of the invention is
25 produced by standard recombinant DNA techniques. For example, DNA fragments coding for the different polypeptide sequences are ligated together in-frame in accordance with conventional techniques, for example by employing blunt-ended or stagger-ended termini for ligation, restriction enzyme digestion to provide for appropriate termini, filling-in of cohesive ends as appropriate, alkaline phosphatase
30 treatment to avoid undesirable joining, and enzymatic ligation. In another embodiment, the fusion gene can be synthesized by conventional techniques including automated DNA synthesizers. Alternatively, PCR amplification of gene fragments can be carried out using anchor primers which give rise to complementary overhangs between two consecutive gene fragments which can subsequently be annealed and reamplified to
35 generate a chimeric gene sequence (see, for example, *Current Protocols in Molecular Biology*, eds. Ausubel et al. John Wiley & Sons: 1992). Moreover, many expression

vectors are commercially available that already encode a fusion moiety (e.g, a GST polypeptide). A NBE 045-encoding nucleic acid can be cloned into such an expression vector such that the fusion moiety is linked in-frame to the NBE 045 protein.

5 **Functional equivalents**

The terms "functional equivalents" and "functional variants" are used interchangeably herein. Functional equivalents of NBE 045 DNA are isolated DNA fragments that encode a polypeptide that exhibits a particular function of the NBE 045

10 A. niger baking enzyme as defined herein. A functional equivalent of a NBE 045 polypeptide according to the invention is a polypeptide that exhibits at least one function of an A. niger baking enzyme as defined herein. Functional equivalents therefore also encompass biologically active fragments.

Functional protein or polypeptide equivalents may contain only
15 conservative substitutions of one or more amino acids of SEQ ID NO: 3 or substitutions, insertions or deletions of non-essential amino acids. Accordingly, a non-essential amino acid is a residue that can be altered in SEQ ID NO: 3 without substantially altering the biological function. For example, amino acid residues that are conserved among the NBE 045 proteins of the present invention, are predicted to be
20 particularly unamenable to alteration. Furthermore, amino acids conserved among the NBE 045 proteins according to the present invention and other baking enzymes are not likely to be amenable to alteration.

The term "conservative substitution" is intended to mean that a substitution in which the amino acid residue is replaced with an amino acid residue
25 having a similar side chain. These families are known in the art and include amino acids with basic side chains (e.g.lysine, arginine and histidine), acidic side chains (e.g. aspartic acid, glutamic acid), uncharged polar side chains (e.g., glycine, asparagines, glutamine, serine, threonine, tyrosine, cysteine), non-polar side chains (e.g., alanine, valine, leucine, isoleucine, proline, phenylalanine, methionine, tryptophan), beta-
30 branched side chains (e.g., threonine, valine, isoleucine) and aromatic side chains (e.g., tyrosine, phenylalanine tryptophan, histidine).

Functional nucleic acid equivalents may typically contain silent mutations or mutations that do not alter the biological function of encoded polypeptide. Accordingly, the invention provides nucleic acid molecules encoding NBE 045 proteins
35 that contain changes in amino acid residues that are not essential for a particular biological activity. Such NBE 045 proteins differ in amino acid sequence from SEQ ID

NO: 3 yet retain at least one biological activity. In one embodiment the isolated nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleotide sequence encoding a protein, wherein the protein comprises a substantially homologous amino acid sequence of at least about 60%, 65%, 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99% or more
5 homologous to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 3.

For example, guidance concerning how to make phenotypically silent amino acid substitutions is provided in Bowie, J.U. et al., Science 247:1306-1310 (1990) wherein the authors indicate that there are two main approaches for studying the tolerance of an amino acid sequence to change. The first method relies on the
10 process of evolution, in which mutations are either accepted or rejected by natural selection. The second approach uses genetic engineering to introduce amino acid changes at specific positions of a cloned gene and selects or screens to identify sequences that maintain functionality. As the authors state, these studies have revealed that proteins are surprisingly tolerant of amino acid substitutions. The authors
15 further indicate which changes are likely to be permissive at a certain position of the protein. For example, most buried amino acid residues require non-polar side chains, whereas few features of surface side chains are generally conserved. Other such phenotypically silent substitutions are described in Bowie et al, supra, and the references cited therein.

20 An isolated nucleic acid molecule encoding a NBE 045 protein homologous to the protein according to SEQ ID NO: 3 can be created by introducing one or more nucleotide substitutions, additions or deletions into the coding nucleotide sequences according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 such that one or more amino acid substitutions, deletions or insertions are introduced into the encoded protein. Such
25 mutations may be introduced by standard techniques, such as site-directed mutagenesis and PCR-mediated mutagenesis.

The term "functional equivalents" also encompasses orthologues of the A. niger NBE 045 protein. Orthologues of the A. niger NBE 045 protein are proteins that can be isolated from other strains or species and possess a similar or identical
30 biological activity. Such orthologues can readily be identified as comprising an amino acid sequence that is substantially homologous to SEQ ID NO: 3.

As defined herein, the term "substantially homologous" refers to a first amino acid or nucleotide sequence which contains a sufficient or minimum number of identical or equivalent (e.g., with similar side chain) amino acids or nucleotides to a
35 second amino acid or nucleotide sequence such that the first and the second amino acid or nucleotide sequences have a common domain. For example, amino acid or

nucleotide sequences which contain a common domain having about 60%, preferably 65%, more preferably 70%, even more preferably 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98% or 99% identity or more are defined herein as sufficiently identical.

Also, nucleic acids encoding other NBE 045 family members, which
5 thus have a nucleotide sequence that differs from SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2, are within the scope of the invention. Moreover, nucleic acids encoding NBE 045 proteins from different species which thus have a nucleotide sequence which differs from SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 are within the scope of the invention.

Nucleic acid molecules corresponding to variants (e.g. natural allelic
10 variants) and homologues of the NBE 045 DNA of the invention can be isolated based on their homology to the NBE 045 nucleic acids disclosed herein using the cDNAs disclosed herein or a suitable fragment thereof, as a hybridisation probe according to standard hybridisation techniques preferably under highly stringent hybridisation conditions.

15 In addition to naturally occurring allelic variants of the NBE 045 sequence, the skilled person will recognise that changes can be introduced by mutation into the nucleotide sequences of SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 thereby leading to changes in the amino acid sequence of the NBE 045 protein without substantially altering the function of the NBE 045 protein.

20 In another aspect of the invention, improved NBE 045 proteins are provided. Improved NBE 045 proteins are proteins wherein at least one biological activity is improved. Such proteins may be obtained by randomly introducing mutations along all or part of the NBE 045 coding sequence, such as by saturation mutagenesis, and the resulting mutants can be expressed recombinantly and screened for biological
25 activity. For instance, the art provides for standard assays for measuring the enzymatic activity of baking enzymes and thus improved proteins may easily be selected.

In a preferred embodiment the NBE 045 protein has an amino acid sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 3. In another embodiment, the NBE 045 polypeptide is substantially homologous to the amino acid sequence according to SEQ
30 ID NO: 3 and retains at least one biological activity of a polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3, yet differs in amino acid sequence due to natural variation or mutagenesis as described above.

In a further preferred embodiment, the NBE 045 protein has an amino acid sequence encoded by an isolated nucleic acid fragment capable of hybridising to a
35 nucleic acid according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2, preferably under highly stringent hybridisation conditions.

Accordingly, the NBE 045 protein is a protein which comprises an amino acid sequence at least about 60%, 65%, 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99% or more homologous to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 3 and retains at least one functional activity of the polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3.

5 Functional equivalents of a protein according to the invention can also be identified e.g. by screening combinatorial libraries of mutants, e.g. truncation mutants, of the protein of the invention for baking enzyme activity. In one embodiment, a variegated library of variants is generated by combinatorial mutagenesis at the
10 nucleic acid level. A variegated library of variants can be produced by, for example, enzymatically ligating a mixture of synthetic oligonucleotides into gene sequences such that a degenerate set of potential protein sequences is expressible as individual polypeptides, or alternatively, as a set of larger fusion proteins (e.g., for phage display). There are a variety of methods that can be used to produce libraries of potential
15 variants of the polypeptides of the invention from a degenerate oligonucleotide sequence. Methods for synthesizing degenerate oligonucleotides are known in the art (see, e.g., Narang (1983) Tetrahedron 39:3; Itakura et al. (1984) Annu. Rev. Biochem. 53:323; Itakura et al. (1984) Science 198:1056; Ike et al. (1983) Nucleic Acid Res. 11:477).

20 In addition, libraries of fragments of the coding sequence of a polypeptide of the invention can be used to generate a variegated population of polypeptides for screening a subsequent selection of variants. For example, a library of coding sequence fragments can be generated by treating a double stranded PCR fragment of the coding sequence of interest with a nuclease under conditions wherein
25 nicking occurs only about once per molecule, denaturing the double stranded DNA, renaturing the DNA to form double stranded DNA which can include sense/antisense pairs from different nicked products, removing single stranded portions from reformed duplexes by treatment with S1 nuclease, and ligating the resulting fragment library into an expression vector. By this method, an expression library can be derived which
30 encodes N-terminal and internal fragments of various sizes of the protein of interest.

Several techniques are known in the art for screening gene products of combinatorial libraries made by point mutations of truncation, and for screening cDNA libraries for gene products having a selected property. The most widely used techniques, which are amenable to high through-put analysis, for screening large gene
35 libraries typically include cloning the gene library into replicable expression vectors, transforming appropriate cells with the resulting library of vectors, and expressing the

combinatorial genes under conditions in which detection of a desired activity facilitates isolation of the vector encoding the gene whose product was detected. Recursive ensemble mutagenesis (REM), a technique which enhances the frequency of functional mutants in the libraries, can be used in combination with the screening assays to
5 identify variants of a protein of the invention (Arkin and Yourvan (1992) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 89:7811-7815; Delgrave et al. (1993) Protein Engineering 6(3):327-331).

In addition to the NBE 045 gene sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, it will be apparent for the person skilled in the art that DNA sequence polymorphisms that
10 may lead to changes in the amino acid sequence of the NBE 045 protein may exist within a given population. Such genetic polymorphisms may exist in cells from different populations or within a population due to natural allelic variation. Allelic variants may also include functional equivalents.

Fragments of a polynucleotide according to the invention may also
15 comprise polynucleotides not encoding functional polypeptides. Such polynucleotides may function as probes or primers for a PCR reaction.

Nucleic acids according to the invention irrespective of whether they encode functional or non-functional polypeptides, can be used as hybridization probes or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) primers. Uses of the nucleic acid molecules of the
20 present invention that do not encode a polypeptide having a NBE 045 activity include, inter alia, (1) isolating the gene encoding the NBE 045 protein, or allelic variants thereof from a cDNA library e.g. from other organisms than *A. niger*; (2) in situ hybridization (e.g. FISH) to metaphase chromosomal spreads to provide precise chromosomal location of the NBE 045 gene as described in Verma et al., Human
25 Chromosomes: a Manual of Basic Techniques, Pergamon Press, New York (1988); (3) Northern blot analysis for detecting expression of NBE 045 mRNA in specific tissues and/or cells and 4) probes and primers that can be used as a diagnostic tool to analyse the presence of a nucleic acid hybridisable to the NBE 045 probe in a given biological (e.g. tissue) sample.

Also encompassed by the invention is a method of obtaining a
30 functional equivalent of a NBE 045 gene or cDNA. Such a method entails obtaining a labelled probe that includes an isolated nucleic acid which encodes all or a portion of the sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or a variant thereof; screening a nucleic acid fragment library with the labelled probe under conditions that allow hybridisation of the
35 probe to nucleic acid fragments in the library, thereby forming nucleic acid duplexes, and preparing a full-length gene sequence from the nucleic acid fragments in any

labelled duplex to obtain a gene related to the NBE 045 gene.

In one embodiment, a NBE 045 nucleic acid of the invention is at least 60%, 65%, 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99%, or more homologous to a nucleic acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, SEQ ID NO: 2 or the complement thereof.

In another preferred embodiment a NBE 045 polypeptide of the invention is at least 60%, 65%, 70%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99%, or more homologous to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 3.

Host cells

In another embodiment, the invention features cells, e.g., transformed host cells or recombinant host cells that contain a nucleic acid encompassed by the invention. A "transformed cell" or "recombinant cell" is a cell into which (or into an ancestor of which) has been introduced, by means of recombinant DNA techniques, a nucleic acid according to the invention. Both prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells are included, e.g., bacteria, fungi, yeast, and the like, especially preferred are cells from filamentous fungi, in particular *Aspergillus niger*.

A host cell can be chosen that modulates the expression of the inserted sequences, or modifies and processes the gene product in a specific, desired fashion. Such modifications (e.g., glycosylation) and processing (e.g., cleavage) of protein products may facilitate optimal functioning of the protein.

Various host cells have characteristic and specific mechanisms for post-translational processing and modification of proteins and gene products. Appropriate cell lines or host systems familiar to those of skill in the art of molecular biology and/or microbiology can be chosen to ensure the desired and correct modification and processing of the foreign protein expressed. To this end, eukaryotic host cells that possess the cellular machinery for proper processing of the primary transcript, glycosylation, and phosphorylation of the gene product can be used. Such host cells are well known in the art.

Host cells also include, but are not limited to, mammalian cell lines such as CHO, VERO, BHK, HeLa, COS, MDCK, 293, 3T3, WI38, and choroid plexus cell lines.

If desired, the polypeptides according to the invention can be produced by a stably-transfected cell line. A number of vectors suitable for stable

transfection of mammalian cells are available to the public, methods for constructing such cell lines are also publicly known, e.g., in Ausubel et al. (supra).

Antibodies

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The invention further features antibodies, such as monoclonal or polyclonal antibodies, that specifically bind NBE 045 proteins according to the invention.

10 As used herein, the term "antibody" (Ab) or "monoclonal antibody" (Mab) is meant to include intact molecules as well as antibody fragments (such as, for example, Fab and F(ab')₂ fragments) which are capable of specifically binding to NBE 045 protein. Fab and F(ab')₂ fragments lack the Fc fragment of intact antibody, clear more rapidly from the circulation, and may have less non-specific tissue binding of an intact antibody (Wahl et al., *J. Nucl. Med.* 24:316-325 (1983)). Thus, these fragments
15 are preferred.

The antibodies of the present invention may be prepared by any of a variety of methods. For example, cells expressing the NBE 045 protein or an antigenic fragment thereof can be administered to an animal in order to induce the production of sera containing polyclonal antibodies. In a preferred method, a preparation of NBE 045
20 protein is prepared and purified to render it substantially free of natural contaminants. Such a preparation is then introduced into an animal in order to produce polyclonal antisera of greater specific activity.

In the most preferred method, the antibodies of the present invention are monoclonal antibodies (or NBE 045 protein binding fragments thereof). Such
25 monoclonal antibodies can be prepared using hybridoma technology (Kohler et al., *Nature* 256:495 (1975); Kohler et al., *Eur. J. Immunol.* 6:511 (1976); Hammerling et al., In: *Monoclonal Antibodies and T-Cell Hybridomas*, Elsevier, N.Y., pp. 563-681 (1981)). In general, such procedures involve immunizing an animal (preferably a mouse) with a NBE 045 protein antigen or, with a NBE 045 protein expressing cell. The splenocytes
30 of such mice are extracted and fused with a suitable myeloma cell line. Any suitable myeloma cell line may be employed in accordance with the present invention; however, it is preferably to employ the parent myeloma cell line (SP₂O), available from the American Type Culture Collection, Rockville, Maryland. After fusion, the resulting hybridoma cells are selectively maintained in HAT medium, and then cloned by limiting
35 dilution as described by Wands et al. (*Gastro-enterology* 80:225-232 (1981)). The hybridoma cells obtained through such a selection are then assayed to identify clones

which secrete antibodies capable of binding the NBE 045 protein antigen. In general, the polypeptides can be coupled to a carrier protein, such as KLH, as described in Ausubel et al., supra, mixed with an adjuvant, and injected into a host mammal.

5 In particular, various host animals can be immunized by injection of a polypeptide of interest. Examples of suitable host animals include rabbits, mice, guinea pigs, and rats. Various adjuvants can be used to increase the immunological response, depending on the host species, including but not limited to Freund's (complete and incomplete), adjuvant mineral gels such as aluminum hydroxide, surface active substances such as lysolecithin, pluronic polyols, polyanions, peptides, oil emulsions, 10 keyhole limpet hemocyanin, dinitrophenol, BCG (bacille Calmette-Guerin) and *Corynebacterium parvum*. Polyclonal antibodies are heterogeneous populations of antibody molecules derived from the sera of the immunized animals.

Such antibodies can be of any immunoglobulin class including IgG, IgM, IgE, IgA, IgD, and any subclass thereof. The hybridomas producing the mAbs of 15 this invention can be cultivated *in vitro* or *in vivo*.

Once produced, polyclonal or monoclonal antibodies are tested for specific recognition of a NBE 045 polypeptide or functional equivalent thereof in an immunoassay, such as a Western blot or immunoprecipitation analysis using standard techniques, e.g., as described in Ausubel et al., supra. Antibodies that specifically bind 20 to NBE 045 proteins or functional equivalents thereof are useful in the invention. For example, such antibodies can be used in an immunoassay to detect NBE 045 in pathogenic or non-pathogenic strains of *Aspergillus* (e.g., in *Aspergillus* extracts).

Preferably, antibodies of the invention are produced using fragments of the NBE 045 polypeptides that appear likely to be antigenic, by criteria such as high 25 frequency of charged residues. For example, such fragments may be generated by standard techniques of PCR, and then cloned into the pGEX expression vector (Ausubel et al., supra). Fusion proteins may then be expressed in *E. coli* and purified using a glutathione agarose affinity matrix as described in Ausubel, et al., supra. If desired, several (e.g., two or three) fusions can be generated for each protein, and 30 each fusion can be injected into at least two rabbits. Antisera can be raised by injections in a series, typically including at least three booster injections. Typically, the antisera are checked for their ability to immunoprecipitate a recombinant NBE 045 polypeptide or functional equivalents thereof whereas unrelated proteins may serve as a control for the specificity of the immune reaction.

35 Alternatively, techniques described for the production of single chain antibodies (U.S. Patent 4,946,778 and 4,704,692) can be adapted to produce single

chain antibodies against a NBE 045 polypeptide or functional equivalents thereof. Kits for generating and screening phage display libraries are commercially available e.g. from Pharmacia.

5 Additionally, examples of methods and reagents particularly
amenable for use in generating and screening antibody display library can be found in,
for example, U.S. Patent No. 5,223, 409; PCT Publication No. WO 92/18619; PCT
Publication No. WO 91/17271; PCT Publication No. WO 20791; PCT Publication No.
WO 92/20791; PCT Publication No. WO 92/15679; PCT Publication No. WO
93/01288; PCT Publication No. WO 92/01047; PCT Publication No. WO 92/09690;
10 PCT Publication No. WO 90/02809; Fuchs et al. (1991) *Bio/Technology* 9:1370-1372;
Hay et al. (1992) *Hum. Antibod. Hybridomas* 3:81-85; Huse et al. (1989) *Science*
246:1275-1281; Griffiths et al. (1993) *EMBO J.* 12:725-734.

 Polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies that specifically bind NBE 045
polypeptides of functional equivalents thereof can be used, for example, to detect
15 expression of a NBE 045 gene or a functional equivalent thereof e.g. in another strain
of *Aspergillus*. For example, NBE 045 polypeptide can be readily detected in
conventional immunoassays of *Aspergillus* cells or extracts. Examples of suitable
assays include, without limitation, Western blotting, ELISAs, radioimmune assays, and
the like.

20 By "specifically binds" is meant that an antibody recognizes and
binds a particular antigen, e.g., a NBE 045 polypeptide, but does not substantially
recognize and bind other unrelated molecules in a sample.

 Antibodies can be purified, for example, by affinity chromatography
methods in which the polypeptide antigen is immobilized on a resin.

25 An antibody directed against a polypeptide of the invention (e.g.,
monoclonal antibody) can be used to isolate the polypeptide by standard techniques,
such as affinity chromatography or immunoprecipitation. Moreover, such an antibody
can be used to detect the protein (e.g., in a cellular lysate or cell supernatant) in order
to evaluate the abundance and pattern of expression of the polypeptide. The antibodies
30 can also be used diagnostically to monitor protein levels in cells or tissue as part of a
clinical testing procedure, e.g., to, for example, determine the efficacy of a given
treatment regimen or in the diagnosis of Aspergillosis..

 Detection can be facilitated by coupling the antibody to a detectable
substance. Examples of detectable substances include various enzymes, prosthetic
35 groups, fluorescent materials, luminescent materials, bioluminescent materials, and
radioactive materials. Examples of suitable enzymes include horseradish peroxidase,

alkaline phosphatase, β -galactosidase, or acetylcholinesterase; examples of suitable fluorescent materials include umbelliferone, fluorescein, fluorescein isothiocyanate, rhodamine, dichlorotriazinylamine fluorescein, dansyl chloride or phycoerythrin; an example of a luminescent material includes luminol; examples of bioluminescent materials include luciferase, luciferin, and aequorin, and examples of suitable radioactive materials include ^{125}I , ^{131}I , ^{35}S or ^3H .

Preferred epitopes encompassed by the antigenic peptide are regions that are located on the surface of the protein, e.g., hydrophilic regions. Hydrophobicity plots of the proteins of the invention can be used to identify hydrophilic regions.

The antigenic peptide of a protein of the invention comprises at least 7 (preferably 10, 15, 20, or 30) contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3 and encompasses an epitope of the protein such that an antibody raised against the peptide forms a specific immune complex with the protein.

Preferred epitopes encompassed by the antigenic peptide are regions of NBE 045 that are located on the surface of the protein, e.g., hydrophilic regions, hydrophobic regions, alpha regions, beta regions, coil regions, turn regions and flexible regions.

Immunoassays

Qualitative or quantitative determination of a polypeptide according to the present invention in a biological sample can occur using any art-known method. Antibody-based techniques provide special advantages for assaying specific polypeptide levels in a biological sample.

In these, the specific recognition is provided by the primary antibody (polyclonal or monoclonal) but the secondary detection system can utilize fluorescent, enzyme, or other conjugated secondary antibodies. As a result, an immunocomplex is obtained.

Accordingly, the invention provides a method for diagnosing whether a certain organism is infected with *Aspergillus* comprising the steps of:

- Isolating a biological sample from said organism suspected to be infected with *Aspergillus*,
- reacting said biological sample with an antibody according to the invention,
- determining whether immunocomplexes are formed.

Tissues can also be extracted, e.g., with urea and neutral detergent,

for the liberation of protein for Western-blot or dot/slot assay. This technique can also be applied to body fluids.

Other antibody-based methods useful for detecting NBE 045 gene expression include immunoassays, such as the enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) and the radioimmunoassay (RIA). For example, NBE 045-specific monoclonal antibodies can be used both as an immunoabsorbent and as an enzyme-labeled probe to detect and quantify the NBE 045 protein. The amount of NBE 045 protein present in the sample can be calculated by reference to the amount present in a standard preparation using a linear regression computer algorithm. In another ELISA assay, two distinct specific monoclonal antibodies can be used to detect NBE 045 protein in a biological fluid. In this assay, one of the antibodies is used as the immuno-absorbent and the other as the enzyme-labeled probe.

The above techniques may be conducted essentially as a "one-step" or "two-step" assay. The "one-step" assay involves contacting NBE 045 protein with immobilized antibody and, without washing, contacting the mixture with the labeled antibody. The "two-step" assay involves washing before contacting the mixture with the labeled antibody. Other conventional methods may also be employed as suitable. It is usually desirable to immobilize one component of the assay system on a support, thereby allowing other components of the system to be brought into contact with the component and readily removed from the sample.

Suitable enzyme labels include, for example, those from the oxidase group, which catalyze the production of hydrogen peroxide by reacting with substrate. Activity of an oxidase label may be assayed by measuring the concentration of hydrogen peroxide formed by the enzyme-labelled antibody/substrate reaction.

Besides enzymes, other suitable labels include radioisotopes, such as iodine (^{125}I , ^{127}I), carbon (^{14}C), sulphur (^{35}S), tritium (^3H), indium (^{112}In), and technetium ($^{99\text{m}}\text{Tc}$), and fluorescent labels, such as fluorescein and rhodamine, and biotin.

Specific binding of a test compound to a NBE 045 polypeptide can be detected, for example, in vitro by reversibly or irreversibly immobilizing the NBE 045 polypeptide on a substrate, e.g., the surface of a well of a 96-well polystyrene microtitre plate. Methods for immobilizing polypeptides and other small molecules are well known in the art. For example, the microtitre plates can be coated with a NBE 045 polypeptide by adding the polypeptide in a solution (typically, at a concentration of 0.05 to 1 mg/ml in a volume of 1-100 μl) to each well, and incubating the plates at room temperature to 37 °C for 0.1 to 36 hours. Polypeptides that are not bound to the plate can be removed

by shaking the excess solution from the plate, and then washing the plate (once or repeatedly) with water or a buffer. Typically, the polypeptide is contained in water or a buffer. The plate is then washed with a buffer that lacks the bound polypeptide. To block the free protein-binding sites on the plates, the plates are blocked with a protein that is unrelated to the bound polypeptide. For example, 300 ul of bovine serum albumin (BSA) at a concentration of 2 mg/ml in Tris-HCl is suitable. Suitable substrates include those substrates that contain a defined cross-linking chemistry (e.g., plastic substrates, such as polystyrene, styrene, or polypropylene substrates from Corning Costar Corp. (Cambridge, MA), for example) . If desired, a beaded particle, e.g., beaded agarose or beaded sepharose, can be used as the substrate.

Binding of the test compound to the polypeptides according to the invention can be detected by any of a variety of artknown methods. For example, a specific antibody can be used in an immunoassay. If desired, the antibody can be labeled (e.g., fluorescently or with a radioisotope) and detected directly (see, e.g., West and McMahon, J. Cell Biol. 74:264, 1977). Alternatively, a second antibody can be used for detection (e.g., a labeled antibody that binds the Fc portion of an anti-AN97 antibody). In an alternative detection method, the NBE 045 polypeptide is labeled, and the label is detected (e.g., by labeling a NBE 045 polypeptide with a radioisotope, fluorophore, chromophore, or the like). In still another method, the NBE 045 polypeptide is produced as a fusion protein with a protein that can be detected optically, e.g., green fluorescent protein (which can be detected under UV light). In an alternative method, the NBE 045 polypeptide can be covalently attached to or fused with an enzyme having a detectable enzymatic activity, such as horse radish peroxidase, alkaline phosphatase, α -galactosidase, or glucose oxidase. Genes encoding all of these enzymes have been cloned and are readily available for use by those of skill in the art. If desired, the fusion protein can include an antigen, and such an antigen can be detected and measured with a polyclonal or monoclonal antibody using conventional methods. Suitable antigens include enzymes (e.g., horse radish peroxidase, alkaline phosphatase, and α -galactosidase) and non-enzymatic polypeptides (e.g., serum proteins, such as BSA and globulins, and milk proteins, such as caseins).

Epitopes, antigens and immunogens.

In another aspect, the invention provides a peptide or polypeptide comprising an epitope-bearing portion of a polypeptide of the invention. The epitope of

this polypeptide portion is an immunogenic or antigenic epitope of a polypeptide of the invention. An "immunogenic epitope" is defined as a part of a protein that elicits an antibody response when the whole protein is the immunogen. These immunogenic epitopes are believed to be confined to a few loci on the molecule. On the other hand, a region of a protein molecule to which an antibody can bind is defined as an "antigenic epitope." The number of immunogenic epitopes of a protein generally is less than the number of antigenic epitopes. See, for instance, Geysen, H. M. et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 81:3998-4002 (1984).

As to the selection of peptides or polypeptides bearing an antigenic epitope (i.e., that contain a region of a protein molecule to which an antibody can bind), it is well known in that art that relatively short synthetic peptides that mimic part of a protein sequence are routinely capable of eliciting an antiserum that reacts with the partially mimicked protein. See, for instance, Sutcliffe, J. G. et al., Science 219:660-666 (1984). Peptides capable of eliciting protein-reactive sera are frequently represented in the primary sequence of a protein, can be characterized by a set of simple chemical rules, and are confined neither to immunodominant regions of intact proteins (i.e., immunogenic epitopes) nor to the amino or carboxyl terminals. Peptides that are extremely hydrophobic and those of six or fewer residues generally are ineffective at inducing antibodies that bind to the mimicked protein; longer, soluble peptides, especially those containing proline residues, usually are effective. Sutcliffe et al., supra, at 661. For instance, 18 of 20 peptides designed according to these guidelines, containing 8-39 residues covering 75% of the sequence of the influenza virus hemagglutinin HA1 polypeptide chain, induced antibodies that reacted with the HA1 protein or intact virus; and 12/12 peptides from the MuLV polymerase and 18/18 from the rabies glycoprotein induced antibodies that precipitated the respective proteins.

Antigenic epitope-bearing peptides and polypeptides of the invention are therefore useful to raise antibodies, including monoclonal antibodies, that bind specifically to a polypeptide of the invention. Thus, a high proportion of hybridomas obtained by fusion of spleen cells from donors immunized with an antigen epitope-bearing peptide generally secrete antibody reactive with the native protein. Sutcliffe et al., supra, at 663. The antibodies raised by antigenic epitope bearing peptides or polypeptides are useful to detect the mimicked protein, and antibodies to different peptides may be used for tracking the fate of various regions of a protein precursor which undergoes posttranslation processing. The peptides and anti-peptide antibodies may be used in a variety of qualitative or quantitative assays for the mimicked protein, for instance in competition assays since it has been shown that even short peptides

(e.g., about 9 amino acids) can bind and displace the larger peptides in immunoprecipitation assays. See, for instance, Wilson, I.A. et al., Cell 37:767-778 at 777 (1984). The anti-peptide antibodies of the invention also are useful for purification of the mimicked protein, for instance, by adsorption chromatography using methods well known in the art.

Antigenic epitope-bearing peptides and polypeptides of the invention designed according to the above guidelines preferably contain a sequence of at least seven, more preferably at least nine and most preferably between about 15 to about 30 amino acids contained within the amino acid sequence of a polypeptide of the invention. However, peptides or polypeptides comprising a larger portion of an amino acid sequence of a polypeptide of the invention, containing about 30 to about 50 amino acids, or any length up to and including the entire amino acid sequence of a polypeptide of the invention, also are considered epitope-bearing peptides or polypeptides of the invention and also are useful for inducing antibodies that react with the mimicked protein. Preferably, the amino acid sequence of the epitope-bearing peptide is selected to provide substantial solubility in aqueous solvents (i.e., the sequence includes relatively hydrophilic residues and highly hydrophobic sequences are preferably avoided); and sequences containing proline residues are particularly preferred.

The epitope-bearing peptides and polypeptides of the invention may be produced by any conventional means for making peptides or polypeptides including recombinant means using nucleic acid molecules of the invention. For instance, a short epitope-bearing amino acid sequence may be fused to a larger polypeptide which acts as a carrier during recombinant production and purification, as well as during immunization to produce anti-peptide antibodies.

Epitope-bearing peptides also may be synthesized using known methods of chemical synthesis. For instance, Houghten has described a simple method for synthesis of large numbers of peptides, such as 10-20 mg of 248 different 13 residue peptides representing single amino acid variants of a segment of the HAI polypeptide which were prepared and characterized (by ELISA-type binding studies) in less than four weeks. Houghten, R. A., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 82:5131-5135 (1985). This "Simultaneous Multiple Peptide Synthesis (SMPS)" process is further described in U.S. Patent No. 4,631,211 to Houghten et al. (1986). In this procedure the individual resins for the solid-phase synthesis of various peptides are contained in separate solvent-permeable packets, enabling the optimal use of the many identical repetitive steps involved in solid-phase methods.

A completely manual procedure allows 500-1000 or more syntheses to be conducted simultaneously. Houghten et al., *supra*, at 5134.

Epitope-bearing peptides and polypeptides of the invention are used to induce antibodies according to methods well known in the art. See, for instance, 5 Sutcliffe et al., *supra*; Wilson et al., *supra*; Chow, M. et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 82:910-914; and Bittle, F.J. et al., *J. Gen. Virol.* 66:2347-2354 (1985).

Generally, animals may be immunized with free peptide; however, anti-peptide antibody titer may be boosted by coupling of the peptide to a macromolecular carrier, such as keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH) or tetanus toxoid. 10 For instance, peptides containing cysteine may be coupled to carrier using a linker such as maleimidobenzoyl-N-hydroxysuccinimide ester (MBS), while other peptides may be coupled to carrier using a more general linking agent such as glutaraldehyde.

Animals such as rabbits, rats and mice are immunized with either free or carriercoupled peptides, for instance, by intraperitoneal and/or intradermal injection 15 of emulsions containing about 100 ug peptide or carrier protein and Freund's adjuvant. Several booster injections may be needed, for instance, at intervals of about two weeks, to provide a useful titer of anti-peptide antibody which can be detected, for example, by ELISA assay using free peptide adsorbed to a solid surface. The titer of anti-peptide antibodies in serum from an immunized animal may be increased by 20 selection of anti-peptide antibodies, for instance, by adsorption to the peptide on a solid support and elution of the selected antibodies according to methods well known in the art.

Immunogenic epitope-bearing peptides of the invention, i.e., those parts of a protein that elicit an antibody response when the whole protein is the 25 immunogen, are identified according to methods known in the art. For instance, Geysen et al., 1984, *supra*, discloses a procedure for rapid concurrent synthesis on solid supports of hundreds of peptides of sufficient purity to react in an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. Interaction of synthesized peptides with antibodies is then easily detected without removing them from the support. In this manner a peptide 30 bearing an immunogenic epitope of a desired protein may be identified routinely by one of ordinary skill in the art. For instance, the immunologically important epitope in the coat protein of foot-and-mouth disease virus was located by Geysen et al. with a resolution of seven amino acids by synthesis of an overlapping set of all 208 possible hexapeptides covering the entire 213 amino acid sequence of the protein. Then, a 35 complete replacement set of peptides in which all 20 amino acids were substituted in turn at every position within the epitope were synthesized, and the particular amino

acids conferring specificity for the reaction with antibody were determined. Thus, peptide analogs of the epitope-bearing peptides of the invention can be made routinely by this method. U.S. Patent No. 4,708,781 to Geysen (1987) further describes this method of identifying a peptide bearing an immunogenic epitope of a desired protein.

5 Further still, U.S. Patent No. 5,194,392 to Geysen (1990) describes a general method of detecting or determining the sequence of monomers (amino acids or other compounds) which is a topological equivalent of the epitope (i.e., a "mimotope") which is complementary to a particular paratope (antigen binding site) of an antibody of interest. More generally, U.S. Patent No. 4,433,092 to
10 Geysen (1989) describes a method of detecting or determining a sequence of monomers which is a topographical equivalent of a ligand which is complementary to the ligand binding site of a particular receptor of interest. Similarly, U.S. Patent No. 5,480,971 to Houghten, R. A. et al. (1996) on Peralkylated Oligopeptide Mixtures
15 discloses linear C1-C7-alkyl peralkylated oligopeptides and sets and libraries of such peptides, as well as methods for using such oligopeptide sets and libraries for determining the sequence of a peralkylated oligopeptide that preferentially binds to an acceptor molecule of interest. Thus, non-peptide analogs of the epitope-bearing peptides of the invention also can be made routinely by these methods.

20 **Use of NBE 045 baking enzymes in industrial processes**

 The invention also relates to the use of the NBE 045 baking enzyme according to the invention in a selected number of industrial processes. Despite the long term experience obtained with these processes, the baking enzyme according to
25 the invention features a number of significant advantages over the enzymes currently used. Depending on the specific application, these advantages can include aspects like lower production costs, higher specificity towards the substrate, less antigenic, less undesirable side activities, higher yields when produced in a suitable microorganism, more suitable pH and temperature ranges, better tastes of the final product as well as
30 food grade and kosher aspects.

CLAIMS

1. An isolated polynucleotide hybridisable to a polynucleotide according to SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.
- 5 2. An isolated polynucleotide according to claim 1 hybridisable under high stringency conditions to a polynucleotide according to SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.
3. An isolated polynucleotide according to claims 1 or 2 obtainable from a filamentous fungus.
- 10 4. An isolated polynucleotide according to claim 3 obtainable from *A. niger*.
5. An isolated polynucleotide encoding a polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.
6. An isolated polynucleotide encoding at least one functional domain of a polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents thereof.
- 15 7. An isolated polynucleotide comprising a nucleotide sequence according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2 or functional equivalents thereof.
8. An isolated polynucleotide according to SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.
9. A vector comprising a polynucleotide sequence according to claims 1 to 8.
- 20 10. A vector according to claim 9 wherein said polynucleotide sequence according to claims 1 to 8 is operatively linked with regulatory sequences suitable for expression of said polynucleotide sequence in a suitable host cell.
11. A vector according to claim 10 wherein said suitable host cell is a filamentous fungus.
- 25 12. A method for manufacturing a polynucleotide according to claims 1 – 8 or a vector according to claims 9 to 11 comprising the steps of culturing a host cell transformed with said polynucleotide or said vector and isolating said polynucleotide or said vector from said host cell.
13. An isolated polypeptide according to SEQ ID NO: 3 or functional equivalents

thereof.

14. An isolated polypeptide according to claim 13 obtainable from *Aspergillus niger*.
- 5 15. An isolated polypeptide obtainable by expressing a polynucleotide according to claims 1 to 8 or a vector according to claims 9 to 11 in an appropriate host cell, e.g. *Aspergillus niger*.
16. Recombinant baking enzyme comprising a functional domain of a NBE 045 polypeptide.
- 10 17. A method for manufacturing a polypeptide according to claims 13 to 16 comprising the steps of transforming a suitable host cell with an isolated polynucleotide according to claims 1 to 8 or a vector according to claims 9 to 11, culturing said cell under conditions allowing expression of said polynucleotide and optionally purifying the encoded polypeptide from said cell or culture medium.
- 15 18. A recombinant host cell comprising a polynucleotide according to claims 1 to 8 or a vector according to claims 9 to 11.
19. A recombinant host cell expressing a polypeptide according to claims 13 to 16.
20. Purified antibodies reactive with a polypeptide according to claims 13 to 16.
21. Fusion protein comprising a polypeptide sequence according to claims 13 to 16.

ABSTRACT

The invention relates to a newly identified polynucleotide sequence comprising a gene that encodes a novel baking enzyme. The invention features the full length nucleotide sequence of the novel gene, the cDNA sequence comprising the full
5 length coding sequence of the novel baking enzyme as well as the amino acid sequence of the full-length functional protein and functional equivalents thereof. The invention also relates to methods of using these enzymes in industrial processes and methods of diagnosing fungal infections. Also included in the invention are cells transformed with a polynucleotide according to the invention and cells wherein a baking
10 enzyme according to the invention is genetically modified to enhance its activity and/or level of expression.

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 gcc gga ctc gtg cag aat gcc ctg ccc cag aac acc gat ccg ggg agt 336
 Ala Gly Leu Val Gln Asn Ala Leu Pro Gln Asn Thr Asp Pro Gly Ser
 100 105 110
 atc tcc gcc gcg aag cag atg ttc gag gag gcg aat tcg aag tgt ccc 384
 Ile Ser Ala Ala Lys Gln Met Phe Glu Glu Ala Asn Ser Lys Cys Pro
 115 120 125
 aat act aag att gtt gcg ggt ggt tat agt caa gga agc gct gtg att 432
 Asn Thr Lys Ile Val Ala Gly Gly Tyr Ser Gln Gly Ser Ala Val Ile
 130 135 140
 gac aac gcc gtg caa gaa ctc agc acc acc gtg aaa gac caa gtg aag 480
 Asp Asn Ala Val Gln Glu Leu Ser Thr Thr Val Lys Asp Gln Val Lys
 145 150 155 160
 ggt gtc gtg ctc ttc ggg ttc acg aga aac gtg cag gat cac ggg cag 528
 Gly Val Val Leu Phe Gly Phe Thr Arg Asn Val Gln Asp His Gly Gln
 165 170 175
 atc cct aat tac cct aag gat gac gtg aag gtt tat tgt gcc gtg ggc 576
 Ile Pro Asn Tyr Pro Lys Asp Asp Val Lys Val Tyr Cys Ala Val Gly
 180 185 190
 gat ctg gtc tgt gat gat acg ttg gtt gtt acg gcg atg cat ctg acg 624
 Asp Leu Val Cys Asp Asp Thr Leu Val Val Thr Ala Met His Leu Thr
 195 200 205
 tat ggc atg gat gcg ggt gat gcg gcg agc ttt ttg gcc gag aag gtg 672
 Tyr Gly Met Asp Ala Gly Asp Ala Ala Ser Phe Leu Ala Glu Lys Val
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 cag tct tcc agt agt tcg act act agc tcc agc tcg gat gcc gcg agt 720

Gln Ser Ser Ser Ser Ser Thr Thr Ser Ser Ser Ser Asp Ala Ala Ser
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 agt tca tct gct gcg ggg acg tcg tcg tcg ggg ttg tcg gga ctg tct
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768

789

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 35 40 45
 Lys Asp Val Thr Leu Ile Phe Ala Arg Gly Ser Thr Glu Leu Gly Asn
 50 55 60
 Met Gly Thr Val Ile Gly Pro Pro Leu Cys Asp Asn Leu Lys Ser Lys
 65 70 75 80
 Leu Gly Ser Asp Lys Val Ala Cys Gln Gly Val Gly Gly Gln Tyr Ser
 85 90 95
 Ala Gly Leu Val Gln Asn Ala Leu Pro Gln Asn Thr Asp Pro Gly Ser
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 Ile Ser Ala Ala Lys Gln Met Phe Glu Glu Ala Asn Ser Lys Cys Pro
 115 120 125
 Asn Thr Lys Ile Val Ala Gly Gly Tyr Ser Gln Gly Ser Ala Val Ile
 130 135 140
 Asp Asn Ala Val Gln Glu Leu Ser Thr Thr Val Lys Asp Gln Val Lys
 145 150 155 160
 Gly Val Val Leu Phe Gly Phe Thr Arg Asn Val Gln Asp His Gly Gln
 165 170 175
 Ile Pro Asn Tyr Pro Lys Asp Asp Val Lys Val Tyr Cys Ala Val Gly
 180 185 190
 Asp Leu Val Cys Asp Asp Thr Leu Val Val Thr Ala Met His Leu Thr
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 Tyr Gly Met Asp Ala Gly Asp Ala Ala Ser Phe Leu Ala Glu Lys Val
 210 215 220
 Gln Ser Ser Ser Ser Ser Thr Thr Ser Ser Ser Ser Asp Ala Ala Ser
 225 230 235 240
 Ser Ser Ser Ala Ala Gly Thr Ser Ser Ser Gly Leu Ser Gly Leu Ser
 245 250 255
 Ser Phe Phe Gly Gly Leu
 260